(a) whether Government is proposing to include coconut as a cash crop as the coconut water has the bearing of tasty drink for domestic and foreign market; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) and (b) Coconut is a perennial crop. The Coconut Development Board, Kochi, in collaboration with the Defence Food Research Laboratory, Mysore has developed the technology for preserving and packing tender coconut water. According to a study, conducted by the Coconut Development Board in some major cities, the product received fairly good response. The Board has since transferred the aforesaid technology to three entrepreneurs. It is believed that the product, being a natural soft drink, could make inroads to the domestic and foreign markets.

Privatisation of Indian Airlines and Air India

2498. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD : Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to privatise Indian Airlines and Air India by selling 51 per cent of their equity;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the methodology proposed for this purpose;

(d) the objection raised by the employees' union in this regard; and

(e) Government's reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY) : (a) to (c) The recommendations of the Disinvestment Commission of India to disinvest Government's equity in Air India are under consideration. As regards, Indian Airlines, Government has decided to disinvest fifty one percent of equity of Indian Airlines out of which 26% of the equity would be given to a strategic partner who would be given a free hand in the management under the supervision of Board of directors. Remaining 25% of the equity would be offered to the employees, financial institutions and public. The disinvestment of Indian Airlines is expected to result in improved Air-services, efficiency and financial performance, as also higher financial returns to Government.

(d) and (e) While there is no such communication from the Air India employees Union in this regard, some factions of Indian Airlines employees have expressed reservations about the disinvestment in Indian Airlines. Their apprehensions primarily related to service conditions job security and likely change in the character of the airlines. The legitimate interests of the Airlines employees would be fully safeguarded in the process of disinvestment.

ACCELARATION IN DISINVESTMENT IN PSUs

2499. SHRI NANA L. SHIMKH : Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Cabinet Committee on Disinvestment has been reconstituted under the chairmanship of Prime Minister with several important Ministers as Members of the Committee in order to accelatarate disinvestment in public sector enterprises.

(b) if so, what are the recommendations of the Committee, and

(c) what are the names of PSUs/Companies proposed to be privatised ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Cabinet Committee on disinvestment does not make recommendation

(c) Does not arise.

Government Package for NFL and SAIL

2500. SHRI C. M. IBRAHIM : Will the Minister of Disinvestment be pleased to state :

(a) Whether Government have decided to sell of 51 per cent of their stake in National Fertilizer Ltd. and cleared a Rs. 8, 454 crore package for the financial and business restructuring of the ailing SAIL.

(b) if so, the details of the proposals and

(c) the steps taken to implement the same ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY) : (a) and (b)